

## **Activity #4: Steps for Building Portfolios**

### **Section 6: Observing Children's Talk**

There are 3 primary questions to answer when developing a portfolio:

- How are you going to store the portfolio items?
- How can you consistently track the information you're gathering?
- What should be included?

#### **1. How are you going to store the portfolio items?**

If you don't have a system in place, you will begin collecting items and end up with a huge pile of papers and no place to put them. Here are some things to think about when you are deciding how to store your portfolios:

- Can it be divided into sections? Dividing the portfolio into time segments helps with organization. It could be divided by 6 weeks or by month.
- Is it easy to get into when it's time to file items? If not, chances are you won't use it.
- How much storage space will be required to house all the portfolios? Do you have enough space?
- Will it hold everything you want to save for the whole year?
- Is it inexpensive?

Here are some ideas that work well:

- accordion folders
- pizza boxes
- 3-ring binders
- hanging file folders
- teacher-made file portfolio folders
- manila folders banded together
- large brown grocery bags

#### **2. How can you consistently track the information you're gathering?**

Keep in mind the portfolio is much like a cognitive "scrapbook" for each child. You should be collecting samples of the same types of items periodically throughout the year. A great way to keep track is to make a work-sample tracking chart that includes the names of the children and the items you wish to collect. Keep it in your lesson plan book and check it off when you obtain the sample. This will help you see who you may not have collected items from.

Another idea is to make a tracking sheet for each child and attach it to the front of the portfolio. Check off the items as you collect them and put them in the portfolio. (HINT: Look in your CIRCLE manual for a sample.)

### 3. What should be included?

Samples from across all cognitive domains should be included—not just art and writing. Think about including anecdotal notes as well as items that reveal information about the child in math, language/literacy, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and writing.

Here are a few ideas of what to include in the portfolio:

- **Math:** photographs of finished work when graphing, patterning, sorting, counting, matching
- **Language/Literacy:** dictated stories, reading logs, assessment information, tape-recorded interviews with the child, child's daily news
- **Writing:** journal pages, name writing samples, sign-in sheets, child-made labels
- **Letter Knowledge:** samples of letter writing and identification
- **Phonological Awareness:** samples or pictures of child's demonstration of phonological awareness skills
- **Art:** painting, drawing, collages, 3-D art
- **Anecdotal records:** short statements documenting and describing what a child does. MUST be factual, free from opinions and judgments.
- Other items which might be included:
  - Family information (family questionnaires)
  - Formal and informal assessments (screening tests and developmental scales, CIRCLE assessment reports, checklists, etc.)
  - Fine motor skills (scissor-work)
  - Parent conference notes
  - Activity charts (where a child spends his time during centers)
  - Documentation of block skills (dumping, stacks and rows, enclosures, representational building, etc.)

*Adapted from:*  
*The Portfolio and Its Use—A Road Map for Assessment*  
*by Sharon McDonald*